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*White Noise*: Response Paper Four

Having unsettling ominous feelings or visions is one thing, but actually having these unnerving and disturbing events unravel is a completely different issue entirely. This is exactly what happened to Jack’s character in the section entitled, “The Airborne Toxic Event.” This section of the novel is the connecting bridge between what Jack feels is going to happen, and what actually happens. It went from the first part of the novel where, Jack had unsettling feelings about death and the future, to the present being toxic and just as disturbing as he imagined. Thus, DeLillo is making the connection to the reader that sometimes our perverse fantasies can become reality.

In the first part of the novel, Jack is constantly pondering the idea of death. He is always wondering who is going to die and when they are going to do it. He also feels that because his life moves very quickly, he is getting closer and closer to death everyday. He especially fears who will perish first in his marriage, either him, or Babette. His love for her is undying, but he constantly wonders when the physicality of it all will end. “Sometimes I think our love is inexperienced. The question of dying becomes a wise reminder. It cures our innocence of the future” (DeLillo 15). The author makes sure to include all of these instances because it is the foreshadowing needed to create the connection to the readers between what Jack is being paranoid about, and what is actually occurring.

The chapter entitled, “The Airborne Toxic Event” is the key factor that makes the connection for the reader between what is delusion and what is actually occurring. During this chapter a dark cloud of smoke in the distance is the symbol of Jack’s nightmare of ominous death becoming a reality. DeLillo even foreshadows the smoke being the demise of any innocent bliss Jack has left way back in chapter 4, “[death] is it some inert element in the air we breath?” (DeLillo 15). Little did Jack realize, the air he breathes is truly toxic. The author used this comparison in order to show the irony of life as well as death.

The author continued to show the irony of fantasies becoming realities when describing Jack’s reaction to the possibility of death that was thrust upon him. Jack was trying to rationalize that his delusions about death weren’t coming true. He would deny and discredit everything Heinrich had to say about the Nyodene D in the air, and wouldn’t even flee to safety because he didn’t want to discredit his position as a man of academia. DeLillo clearly used this instance as a means to describe how differently people behave when they are truly faced with danger.

Ultimately, the author uses irony and foreshadowing to make the connections between Jack’s perverted delusions of death and the possibility of death that can actually occur. While Jack will constantly obsess about death when he isn’t in danger, he won’t even bat an eyelash when he is facing death. DeLillo made sure to carefully construct the bridge that makes these connections in order to describe not only the human condition when facing death, but also to make the connection between fantasy and reality, no matter which situation was more favorable.